April – June 1999

Contingency Preparedness Review

A quarterly newsletter prepared by the Contingency Preparedness School, RTC Yorktown

Command & Control Course: Did You Miss IT?

Staff Article…

The March 1999 convening of our Command & Control Course proved to be one of our most exciting offerings to date.

The Command & Control course is normally convened twice a year for senior officers who are Commanding Officers or Executive Officers of Marine Safety Offices, Groups, Activities, Air Stations and other units as appropriate. The training focuses on Command & Control core doctrine issues from an all-hazards perspective, including command relationships, crisis communications & public affairs, risk assessment, and response management systems and ICS-400.

A long-standing goal of the Contingency Preparedness School has been to have a solid cross-programmatic representation of students in the Command and Control course. The March convening saw that goal realized. The group of attendees included officers from very broad backgrounds, with almost equal representation for Air Stations, Marine Safety Offices, and Groups. The interaction generated by this mix of attendees was excellent—allowing everyone to identify common issues and concerns, realize potential conflicts, and gain some insight into the other programs' challenges.

Course attendees acknowledged that this is the kind of course necessary to promote and enhance unit of effort between the Operational and Marine Safety communities when working under one command structure during contingency responses.

Our continued training goal is to ensure that each Command and Control course has this mix of Operational and Marine Safety students. The next Command & Control convening will not occur until the first part of FY00. Until then, ask for a quota and we'll keep the course material current and relevant to your command and control needs in the field.

PISCES: Investigating Potential Benefits

By LT David Haynes, Assistant School Chief, Contingency Preparedness School, RTC Yorktown.

Our last newsletter informed you what the Pollution Incident Simulation, Control, and Evaluation System (PISCES), a computer software program was all about and it capabilities. Since then, I've had the opportunity to test it as well as deploy it for an actual exercise.

In my initial test, I designed a small exercise and then installed a mobile GPS tracking unit (we have 5) onboard one of our local CG 41' UTB's and set up the PISCES base station in Hamilton Hall. The goal was to track the 41' as it transited out of Wormly Creek and around the York River while I monitored its progress on the computer screen at the base station. As expected, the PISCES tracked the 41' with GPS accuracy, recording its real-time movement as well as its speed and course vector by actively plotting its movement on the computer's electronic charting program. Accuracy was verified via VHF radio communications with the 41' Coxswain.

Recently, as the Situation Unit Leader for an offshore oil spill insitu burn exercise in Galveston, Texas, I used the PISCES program and equipment to assist the Coast Guard R&D Center track and display five exercise vessels' real-time positions while they conducted mechanical recovery maneuvers approximately 6 to 7 miles offshore.

Unexpectedly, PISCES experienced some range problems which hampered its effectiveness, but only because of a wrong sized VHF receiver antenna. In October 1999, the R&D Center will conduct another exercise in Galveston and is planning to use the PISCES to track and display vessel position, only this time we'll employ the right antenna.

Interoperability and its Relationship to Preparedness

By LT Judy Persall, Instructor, Contingency Preparedness School

Coast Guard Contingency Preparedness crosses all program lines. Its doctrines and policies represent consolidated efforts of the Coast Guard's major operating and support programs toward a common vision and mission. Each of these programs have functions that are an integral part of Coast Guard Preparedness. Making your Plans ***interoperable*** with other programs ensures mission accomplishment. There are numerous methods to accomplish this goal.

- **BE AWARE OF CAPABILITIES**. Being aware of the capabilities of surrounding Coast Guard assets and mission priorities is vital. Knowing the crew complement, messing requirements and SAR readiness requirements ahead of time will ensure a quicker and smoother operation of the response when requesting assets from a Group, Activity, or District.

- **GAIN PLANNING ASSISTANCE**. As you develop the Plan, it is recommended that you obtain preparedness planning assistance and cooperation from the various Coast Guard programs/units throughout your AOR. The best time to clarify jurisdiction/authority, policies, procedures and resource capability is when you're conducting preparedness planning, not when the incident occurs.

- **EDUCATE OTHERS**. Educating local, state, and other federal agencies, as well as other Coast Guard units, as to the specifics of program missions, and helping them understand their supporting roles, gains considerable support and cooperation. This greatly reduces conflict during a response.

- **STAY CURRENT**. Update your preparedness information frequently to reflect any operational upgrades or loss of assets.

- **REMAIN FLEXIBLE**. Priorities shift due to changes in operations. Be aware of others constraints and work with them to resolve any conflicting issues.

Making your preparedness plans interoperable with available Coast Guard assets and other resources is essential to success. Incorporating this knowledge into your plan **increases your probability of success.**

LT Persall is an instructor at the Contingency Preparedness School. She recently received orders to MSO San Francisco and will be departing summer 1999.

Lessons Learned Prototype on the Internet and Intranet

Extracted from the internet web site and edited by the CPR Staff…

"Welcome to the Coast Guard Standard After-Action Reporting System." That's what this particular web site reads if you were to check out the Coast Guard's new "lessons learned" web site being developed by G-MOR and G-OPF.

Currently, the database is a prototype with limited access, but once all tests are complete and approvals granted, the new Coast Guard lessons learned system will be able to collect and distribute after-action reports, lessons learned, and best practices generated from unclassified operations, incidents, and exercises involving the Coast Guard and will be used Coast Guard-wide. It's envisioned that the database will provide a means to easily access lessons learned and best practices via the internet.

Also, many of these after-action reports, lessons learned and best practices involve numerous other organizations, including federal and state governments, and industry including those from pollution incidents, PREP's and other exercises. The overall intent is to share meaningful information to improve responses and design better exercises.

The database has been in the works for some time in the Marine Safety and Operations offices of the Coast Guard and is still in the prototype stage. The project is expected to be completed in stages, with the first stage providing internet access to after-action reports, lessons learned, and best practices and the second stage having it placed on the Coast Guard intranet and the classified system

A fun part of this project will be the opportunity to rename the new lessons learned system. A quote from one of the prototype pages said, "*We'll never go back to CGULLS, but we don't think CG-STAARS gives you the whole picture. We need a name that conveys the essence of the software application. This is your system, what would you want to call it?"* Sounds like a good challenge for the enterprising thinker.

Because the system is a prototype, not everyone will receive access until the system is fully operational. However, if you'd like to view the Prototype and provide constructive comments, please contact your District planning/exercise branch for the web site address.

Lessons Learned Reports are stand alone records that document specific issues, problem areas, best practices and work-arounds pertaining to operations, contingency responses, or exercises.

Three Keys To A Successful Exercise

By LCDR Robert Hennessy, Executive Officer, MSO Huntington West Virginia

Successful oil spill exercises are conducted by the oil industry almost every day throughout the world, and in many cases, they were successful because clear objectives were set, the spill scenario was mitigated, and the players developed a long list of lessons learned. This was especially true for a recent spill response exercise sponsored by Marathon Ashland Petroleum Company (MAP), but in their case some added bonuses occurred.

The company discovered that there were three elements of success: commitment to investing the appropriate money and time; willingness to present a realistic scenario played out in real time; and partnering with city, county, state, and federal agencies for full participation.

During the week of October 26-29, 1998, MAP held a major response drill in Huntington, West Virginia. It was the first major drill for the newly formed company (Marathon Oil and Ashland Petroleum merged on January 1, 1998). Their goal was to familiarize their newly formed company with the Incident Command System, and to acquaint their new employees with each other and the new company's assets.

Kenova, West Virginia was chosen for the scenario setting to ensure that the new response team would become familiar with Ashland's major refinery and the complexity of the region. This site is unique because of the converging of three EPA zones (Regions III, IV, and IV), three states (Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia), three cities (Kenova, WV, South Point, Ohio, and Catlettsburg, KY) and Coast Guard Captain of The Port (COTP) Huntington.

"...THERE WERE THREE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS: COMMITMENT TO INVESTING THE APPROPRIATE MONEY AND TIME; WILLINGNESS TO PRESENT A REALISTIC SCENARIO PLAYED OUT IN REAL TIME; AND PARTNERING WITH CITY, COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES FOR FULL PARTICIPATION."

The exercise scenario consisted of a six-barge tow, loaded with butadiene and styrene, which was transiting up the Ohio river when it lost steering and propulsion. The tow then collided with the Kenova loaded fleet. The loaded fleet consisted of approximately 20 barges with commodities ranging from #6 fuel oil to butane. The collision caused an explosion and ensuing fire that engulfed a #6 fuel oil barge and a light coal tar barge within the loaded fleeting area. Both of these barges were leaking significant amounts of product.

Needless to say the scenario was complex enough to keep all participating agencies and industry quite busy. As might be expected, the response team came together and was able to successfully mitigate the problem. This drill was successful not only because of an excellent response, but because of the format, length of exercise play, and the involvement of local, county, state, and federal agencies.

Commitment, Time, and Money

The first key element for why this exercise was a success was the desire of designers and Marathon Ashland Petroleum to commit time and money to exercise over a two and a half day period. This allowed the response team to progress naturally from a crisis/emergency phase to the planning/strategic phase.

Because of the time frame of the exercise, the response team was able to complete two planning cycles within the Incident Command System. The ability to accomplish this task was a major plus for the training of response team members.

Too often the exercise objectives drive the response team into the planning cycle too quickly, or the drill never really moves out of the emergency phase, resulting in a quickly thrown together incident action plan that is not effective or realistic.

PACE…Real time play

Another important element to the success of this drill was the pace of the exercise. Because the drill spanned two and a half days, the exercise was played in real time. Designers and controllers intentionally minimized the small oddball items from the drill scenario. Too often, in other drills in which I have participated in, the control team has interjected too many scenario items. That can make the pace of the drill unmanageable or unrealistic. Thus preventing the response team from focusing on primary objectives.

Though there was the usual initial chaos during the emergency/crisis phase of the MAP drill, the scenario did play out fully and moved effectively to a routine planning phase. Even as the scenario slowed, the issues were still complex enough that every aspect of the Incident Command System had plenty to deal with.

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The real time pace of the exercise was essential for response team members to learn their roles within the Incident Command System, and to develop a complete and realistic incident action plan.

Participation…It's in your best interest

A final successful ingredient was the participation of all levels of government in the drill. The MAP exercise had representatives from the local 911 center, city government, police, Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC), state emergency management, state and federal EPA, and the U. S. Coast Guard.

From a Coast Guard perspective the interface between industry and government was well balanced. Though the Coast Guard was the Federal on Scene Coordinator (FOSC) and charged with overseeing the cleanup efforts, he quickly listened to and addressed community and local government concerns.

Without local authorities and community representatives, certain issues could not have been thoroughly addressed. Issues such as evacuations, impact of the evacuations, community care in shelters, security and safety of evacuated communities, etc., were effectively dealt with. The importance of involving a complete cross section of the government can not be overstated. It is important for the FOSC, responsible party, and state on scene representative to understand the local authorities' concerns and responsibilities.

To successfully integrate the local community into the Unified Command System, the liaison officers must be fully implemented into the response structure. By not integrating liaison officers into the drill scenario, vital communication with the local authorities and community will not occur, and an essential role would be severely missed.

Conclusion

As the response community continues to develop exercises under the Preparedness Response Exercise Program (PREP), it is important for industry and the Coast Guard to invest in the development of exercises that allow the Incident/Unified Command System to move naturally from the emergency/crisis phase to the planning phase. We should develop exercises that facilitate the planning cycle and permit sufficient time to drill through several operational and planning cycles.

We must also continue to involve the LEPC's in our exercise planning process. Our mission is to protect the environment and the local community while minimizing the effects of the spill on commerce. LEPC's are the link to the local community and vital to the success of that mission.

LCDR Hennessy is the Executive Officer of MSO Huntington West Virginia. His previous tours include: Assistant Chief Port Operations at MSO Philadelphia; Assistant SIO at MSO Portland, OR; and Port Operations & Marine Inspections at MSO Houston.

Commander, Coast Guard Forces (CCGF) Update

By Mr. Sam Korson, Commandant (G-OPF-3)

On 12 March 1999, Admiral Loy signed the memo that officially disestablished Commander, Coast Guard Forces (CCGF). As of that moment, the CCGF concept became a matter of Coast Guard history.

The Coast Guard's primary contingency response management system will be the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) as adopted in the Commandant Instruction 3120.14 on August 24, 1998.

In addition to NIIMS ICS, the Coast Guard will also use a command and control authority known as Coast Guard Incident Commander (CGIC) for those incidents where there is a need to have one Coast Guard incident commander established. This person is selected by the District Commander and given operational control over assigned assets.

Further details outlining the use of these response organizations and command authorities will be better detailed in the rewrite to Volume I of the Contingency Preparedness Planning Manual (CPPM Vol. I).

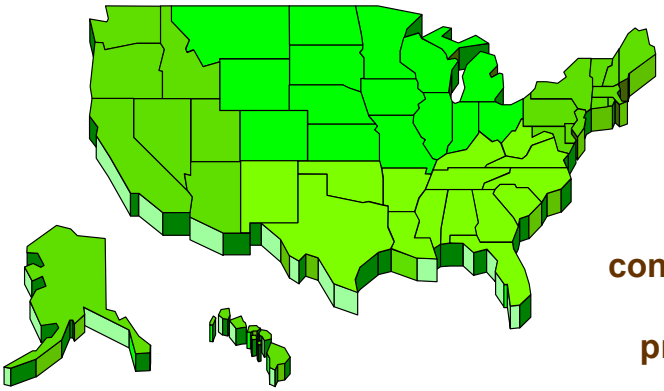
Other actions to be taken are:

- G-OPF-3 will draft an ALCOAST that announces the demise of CCGF.
- G-OPF-3 will coordinate with the appropriate Headquarters, Area, and staff elements to eliminate CCGF from the following publications:
  - Coast Guard Regulations
  - OPFAC Manual
  - Standard Distribution List
  - Marine Safety Manual
  - Contingency Preparedness Planning Manual, Volume I
  - Contingency Preparedness Planning Manual, Volume III, and Exercise Planning Manual
  - Any Department of Defense publications that reference CCGF
  - LANTAREA/PACAREA Planning Guidance

If there are any questions or comments regarding the above, please contact me at (202) 267-6276, or e-mail me at skorson@comdt.uscg.mil.

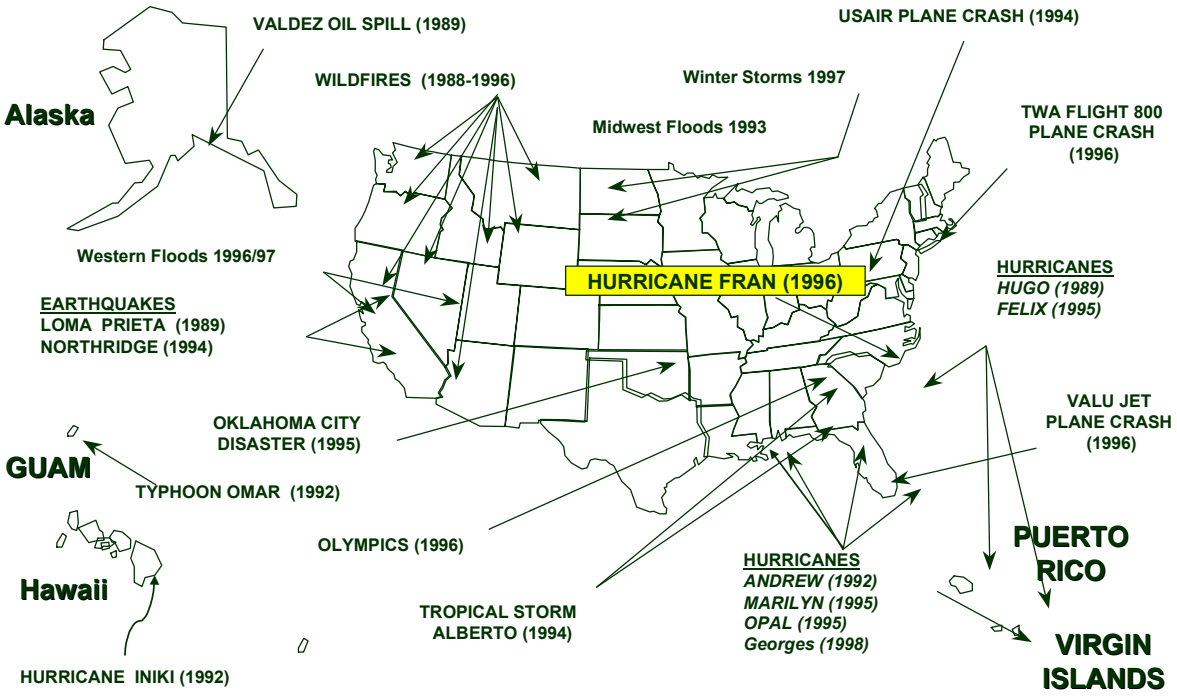
Mr. Korson is a program analyst at Commandant G-OPF-3, and is a regular contributor to this newsletter.

Good preparedness should lead to good response, and good response should indicate good preparedness.



The primary goal of contingency preparedness is to increase the probability of success.

Examples of Recent Domestic Contingencies



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This newsletter is an authorized publication of news and information relating to the Contingency Preparedness program and is published quarterly. Material is for information only and not for action.

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